

His Friend's Widow



A THREE ACT PLAY

BY

CORA McWHINEY HAND

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His Friend's Widow

By Cora McWhiney Hand,
Plains, Montana.

ACT I.

SCENE 1.—Office of a small hotel in a country village. To the left is a garden of flowers. A door in the wall through center of stage opens into the office. The clerk is busy behind the desk at corner of left. Double doors are at center back, and to the right of office room is a winding stairway. Three young ladies enter the office through the rear double doors. One is a beautiful blonde (Ella); one is a beautiful brunette (Mary); the third (Rose) is neither—a between type—but also beautiful. They are spending their vacation at the hotel.

Mary (*peevishly*): Is this a hotel for women only?

Rose (*brightly indifferent*): "God made the country!"—it may be that man
Is so enamoured of his own creation
He cannot leave it to rusticate here.

Ella (*fretfully*): Two days passed; and not a male guest arrived.

Rose: And the world might be dead, for all the news.

Clerk: I've news for you—and it's about a man.

Mary: Oh! has one come? Or wired to engage room?

Clerk: He's coming to the town; but may not stop
At this hotel. The high-priced one at end
Of lake may suit him best. But I can tell
You most interesting news about him.

Ella: Well, out, tell it. I'm losing my hearing.

Rose: And bats will soon roost in the silent caves
Of our ears!

Clerk: His name's Holt. And he is rich
As Croesus. He's coming to this town
To marry a——

Ella: Oh, when will he arrive?

Mary: Glory! A bachelor! I thought of it first.

Clerk: Widow (*Aside*): It's a shame to deal this blow!

Rose: He's coming to marry a widow, girls.

Clerk: Yes. It is interesting, but bad news.
Shall I go on with the tale. It's quite good.

Mary: I fancy it's the very common one:—
Intiguing widow; and flattered man!

Ella: Maids plan; but widows plot—Let's list and learn.

Clerk: Ladies, it was this way: Holt had a friend—
 A poet—and since boyhood they had loved
 Like brothers. Even more dear and loyal.
 The end of college days brought parted paths
 But not divided hearts. The poet came
 Drifting here in search of quiet beauty.
 In nearby town he met a pretty maid,
 And wedded, they came here and settled down.
 Because, he said, no poet's soul can find
 More satisfying food for its fair dreams
 Than here; where *Pend d' Oreille's* blue, rippling waves
 Reflect with marvelous witchery the
 Age-old concepts of lost, perfect Eden—
 You know these poets talk funny like that!
 From its hillside shores he used to gaze down
 And see everything in it but fish.
 He was a frail chap; and his wife frail, too.
 And so he got to fear that he should die,
 And leave her naught but unsold negatives
 Of his impressionable thoughts; some clear
 And good, but more to him than they ever
 Could be to the world. Poor chap, he died.
 But dying, made a compact with his friend
 That he should come and wed his widow soon.
 They lived apart from all the village folk;
 But rumors fly in little towns like birds.
 And so it's known that Hugh Holt comes today
 To meet for the first time his widow-bride.
 It is known, too, he is a millionaire.
 (*Pointing out toward garden*)—
 See yonder hungalow at edge of town?
 It is all the poet-husband left her;
 And it mortgaged.

Ella: Her troubles now are done!
 (*The three girls pass into garden at left.*)

Rose (*sighing*): Girls, never before was I close enough
 To a million to feel it slipping through
 My fingers!

Mary: You are not clever enough!
 I have my finger on that million and
 I'm not going to let it slip away!

Rose: Indeed? I then assume your finger ends
 Wear tacks—not nails.

Mary: Girls, we came from the town
 Hoping to find men, here, with time to stop
 And chat when they have met and lifted hat—

Ella: Time! They are wary of marital trap!

Mary: It is unthinkable to let a man,
 A millionaire, escape us easily.
 We can't all marry him; but might divide
 His wealth when one of us has married him.
 I will be that one: I will be his bride.

Rose: Indeed? We infer you've killed the widow.

Mary: We can prevent him meeting her. And I
Shall impersonate her, and win his love.

Rose: Love? You're getting greedy: man! million! love!

Ella: Oh, don't think of poisoning the widow!
The town folk may know she's the opposite
Of your complexion. You might get found out!

Mary: Shocking! To mention such a dreadful thing!
You are too imaginative, but not
Inventive. Aid me, girls, to kidnap her—
I have the wit and courage to carry
This scheme through: Unharmed, she shall be kept
Away, nor know the where nor why of it.
No one shall miss her, and no one miss me
When I shall leave this hotel for her house.
And I'll receive Holt in her home and he
Can doubtless be induced to wed at once;
We'll take the evening train for fair Spokane
And lost amid its thousands we can be
Married. I'll add her name, and his, to mine.
Two days from now we can be on our way
To spend our honeymoon in distant Land.
The widow then is returned to her home.
She need never know he came! 'Waiting her
Is letter from Hugh Holt that simply states
He is obliged to break the news to her
He dared to wed another whom he loves!
If she's a spark of pride she'll never tell
Him—should they meet; nor anyone—her woes.
And I agree to pay a handsome sum
To both of you for helping me to win
This prize (You two 'd be afraid to try for!)

Rose: Dear girl, how bright you are! But I don't see
How the poor widow shall exist at all
When she's brought back to her small mortgaged cot:
Or does it matter if she starves in it?—
Methinks 'twould be right sad; but I am dull.

Mary: A rich wife has the fairies' wand. Fear not
For the young widow; I should quickly find—
With some rich friend!—a life companionship
(Oh, I am clever!) then that friend I'd cut:
And thus avoid danger of meeting her!

Ella: No one can say *you* lack inventiveness!
But I, for one, refuse to help you any.

Mary: It is cowardice that makes some folks good.

Rose (*Aside*): Sometimes the days are dull. Why should I not
Help start some fun, and win a hearty laugh
Beside, I do dislike this "clever" Mary—
And hope she gets caught in a dreadful mess.

(*Aloud*)—You are *so* bright, dear girl, I scarce can help.
But come, I'll hear the whole of all your plan;
That handsome sum appeals to me, I'm sure.

Mary: Adventure calls to me in thrilling tones,
And though its echo you but faintly hear,
Just follow, and I'll lead to rainbow's end!

*(Exit Mary through office to stairs, motioning
to Rose to follow)*

Rose *(Aside to Ella as she follows Mary)*:

Ha! Ha! The rainbow's end is never reached!
Generosity's name is *not* Mary.
What fun! Let's find a way to frustrate her
While appearing to aid her in her plans.

(Exit after Mary.)

Ella *(Aside)*: Trustworthiness, it seems, is *not* named Rose!

How little did I dream I journeyed here
With girlish twin shades of Napoleon!
His shades shall meet what he met—Waterloo!
And being in the thrilling atmosphere
Of their rare plotting makes my brain to move;
The thoughts that leap in it make me suspect
'Tis stupid folk who think themselves most clever!
*(While Ella gathers flowers, Mary comes down the stairway
carrying her suitcase. Ella spies on her through window.)*

Clerk: What, leaving us, Miss Mary?

Mary: I have just
Received a telegram that my mother
Is ill. I'm sorry to leave your pleasant
Hotel. Goodbye.
*(Exit Mary through double doors. Rose comes down
stairway with suitcase.)*

Clerk: Are you leaving, Miss Rose?

Rose: Sorry. But a telegram—my father—*(Feigns weeping)*
Give my love to the dear girls I leave still
Enjoying this sweet Paradise of rest.
(Exits double doors.)

Ella *(Aside)*: Now what's their scheme? I might have known as much
As they do had I but learned dissembling.
Ah! I think I have it now. Mary goes
To the cottage, and Rose to the hotel
At end of Lake: where I had planned to go.
I'll go anyhow! This affair'll be so mixed
I may as well go scramble Mary's eggs
Into an omelet. The handsome sum
She'd give anybody is truly in
The pot at rainbow's end.

*(She exits hastily through the office and soon appears
there again carrying suitcase.)*

Clerk: Well! I declare—

Ella: I am obliged to leave this charming place.
My sister telegraphed she is quite ill.

Clerk (*Aside*): It seems an epidemic's struck somewhere.
That was a bad break I made about Holt
Preferring to stop at the Lake Hotel—
Now four are going to be out money—
Myself, because I lose my customers—
They go where they can ill afford to pay.
(*Ella pays her bill. Exits double doors.*
Enter Hugh Holt through double doors, with suitcase.)

Holt: A room, my man. And then direct me to
The home of Mrs. Lynn Dunn.
(*He signs the register. The Clerk points out the roof
of the bungalow visible through the distant trees.*)

Clerk: All right, sir.
See yonder vinehung roof amid the trees?
A little bungalow, grown 'round with flow'rs
Not one whit sweeter than the mistress there!
(*Clerk precedes Holt up the stairs. Ella enters through
double doors. Clerk returns.*)

Ella: I have just met the messenger boy with
Another telegram—My sister is
Much better. And I do not have to go.
(*Aside*): Now I must hasten to my room and think
How best to execute my clever plan.
(*Ella exists up stairs hurriedly.*)

Clerk (*Aside*): I think the boy she met is most a man.

ACT II

SCENE 1.—To the left is a road. A hedge separates it from a flower-bordered lawn in the rear of a bungalow. The bungalow is to the right. A path leads around it toward its front, off-stage to the right. Mrs. Dunn, pale, frail, and dark-haired, is seated by a table on the lawn. There is an extra chair by the table. Mary appears in the road. She enters the garden by a gate in the hedge, and approaches Mrs. Dunn.

Mary: Mrs. Dunn?—Forgive me this intrusion.
But I too am a poet—poetess—
And I have adored, ah, simply adored,
The verses of your departed husband.
His early death pierced my heart with sorrow
That his sweet songs the world no more should hear.
So I have dared to come and speak to you
Words I trust your memory will cherish
As a fragrant spiritual bouquet.
(*Mrs. Dunn slowly rises in surprise and goes around
table. She offers her hand to Mary.*)

Mrs. Dunn: This is sweet of you. Will you be seated?

Mary: You are too gracious. Ah, how lovely
Is your garden! If it be true that we
Bend our endeavors as we go through life
To matching our surroundings to our thoughts—
And chafe in restlessness until we do!—
Then this fair spot reflects your husband's mind.

Mrs. Dunn: He could not bear to live without flowers.

The day is warm. I'll fetch you some iced tea.

(Mrs. Dunn disappears into rear bungalow door, right.)

(Ella has appeared in the road, and spies over the hedge.)

Ella (Aside): I'll linger in this road, and be the first

To meet and greet Hugh Holt. My little scheme—

If it works—will prevent his ent'ring here!

(Mrs. Dunn reappears with pitcher and glasses.)

Mary: And do you, Mrs. Dunn, live here alone?

I daresay none can comfort since he's gone;

Yet do the village folk come often here?

Mrs. Dunn: We lived secluded. And I have no wish

To meet and converse with those prosaic ones

Who understand a poet so little

That they believe he writes mere jingling rhymes.

(While they are talking, Mary, unobserved, drops a powder in Mrs. Dunn's glass.)

Mary: Ah, you are right. Better the soul's lonely

Communion with its highest ideals—

Exalted on pure, shining peaks of thought—

Than the dull, dead'ning sound of stupid words

That speak of death and ill as if they were.

Mrs. Dunn: You are a poetess I do perceive.

(Mrs. Dunn sinks back in her chair unconscious. Mary

rises and signals. Two men, who have been hiding

behind the hedge, leap it, and run forward. They

carry Mrs. Dunn away. Mary sits again.)

(Rose comes along the path from front of the house.)

Mary: What are you doing here? Unwelcome guest!

Rose: What are you doing here? How goes the game?

Mary: I have just acquired a life companion

For some rich lady friend. Everything

Is lovely.—But Hugh Holt may appear at

Any moment!—So I hope you'll excuse

Mrs. Dunn and make haste to take yourself

Off; before you spoil all my well laid plans.

Rose: Oh, clever, clever girl! I'd linger here

Just gazing on you with admiration!

Mary: I could scarce tear myself from my mirror.

I beg you to go!—Send me your address

So I can send a third of the million!

Rose: When you get the million! Ah, yes. (Aside): I go;

But only to the front of the house, so

I may intercept Holt there and tell him

The grief I'm having with a crazy maid.

(She retreats again along path and disappears to right.)

Mary (Aside): All's well; but that girl Rose does worry me.

(Mary examines a book of etchings on the table.)

(Hugh Holt and Ella appear in the road. They meet.)

Ella: Ah can it be? Oh, joy! indeed it is
My friend—my husband's dear, loved friend Hugh Holt—
And so, of course, my friend, my best of friends!

Holt: This is a pleasure sweeter than I dreamed!

Ella: How fortunate I met you ere you crossed
The threshold of my most disordered home.
Dear Lynn was so ill, you know, for sometime—
Oh did you not know?—(*He kept it from you*)—
That I have deemed it best to renovate
And have the painter tint the walls again.
Meanwhile I'm stopping at a little inn,
The cheapest in the town—but then you know—!
And I am on my way there now. So, come—

(*Aside*): Good heavens, no, I must not *take* him there
But go before him and prepare the way
For meeting him as a long forgotten
(But now a suddenly remembered friend)
This situation demands thought and care,
So that the Inn Clerk may not spoil my plans.

(*Aloud*): I forgot: the Women's Club is meeting;
I'm President; and must be there at once!
But stroll about our village, if you care
For rustic charm and beauty: it is here.
At five, go to the Restful Inn where we
Can stop until my home is fit for you.
Probably I should caution you against
The Inn keeper—he's such a dreadful bore
To talk. (You'll be grateful that I warned you!)
And now you can treat him like a faucet:
Keep him turned off so that his words can't flow!
(*With a gay wave of hand, she exits from road, left.*)

Holt: It is evident that Lynn chose his wife
For beauty, as he did his rhyming lines.
And what a charming nest he built for her.
No harm to leap this hedge I guess and spy
Upon the lovely flowers blooming here.
(*He leaps lightly over the hedge, and beholds Mary.*)

Holt (*Advancing*): Forgive me for this rude intrusion! Ah,
How could I guess, when coveting a rose,
The fairest one in all the world grew here?—

Mary: Can it be you are my husband's—Lynn's—friend?
Hugh Holt whom he esteemed above all men?

Holt: But you cannot be Mrs. Dunn!

Mary: Whom else
Should I be? Most certainly I am she.

Holt (*Rubbing hand over his eyes*):
If so, then I've had a dream about you.

Mary (*Uneasily*): How?

Holt: I dreamed we met on a village road
And you were different, quite different:
Your hair looked like a spider had spun it
Of waving, glinting, threads of sunny light;
Your eyes were blue like pansies I have seen,
That blend to gray with velvety softness.

Mary (*Laughing*): Blest mortal, 'twas a vision that you had;
Seeing me as I shall look in Heaven
When I have joined the Angel Band up there.
But if we've met on this Earth e'er before
I think 'twas in our fish and tadpole days!—
Although it may be we have met since then:
Perhaps our chameleon and lizard days!
Then my col'ring may have been different.

(*Aside*): I am frightened. Yet he could not have met
Rose! And Mrs. Dunn's hair is black; if it
Is possible he has seen her picture.

(*Aloud*): You must be almost wilted with the heat—
I'll go renew the ice in this iced tea.
(*She enters rear bungalow door with pitcher.*)
(*Rose comes along path from right and joins Holt.*)

Rose: Mr. Holt! What a delightful surprise!
Lynn raved of you until I know you well.
I am his widow, Mrs. Dunn—

Holt: But I
Have just been chatting with a lady fair
Who did assure me *she* is Mrs. Dunn!
(*Rose bursts into merry laughter.*)

Rose: 'Twas only my companion! She, poor thing,
Is subject to hallucinations; but
Is always harmless, if you humor her!
(*Holt puts his hand over his mouth. He appears greatly perplexed, thinking of the lady he met in the road, also.*)

Holt: May I ask if you have *two* companions?

Rose: Just one. Alas! the dearest companion
Woman ever had, is gone. A woman
Companion cannot be the sweet comfort
A brave, strong, wise, true-hearted man can be!
Lynn often told me that you and he were
Alike as two peas in a pod: I see
It is so.—Was not Lynn's idea for
Uniting us poetical?

Holt: Very.
(*Mary appears in bungalow door, sees Rose, and darts back exclaiming*):

Mary (*Aside*): Satanic Imp! What is she doing here?
Easily she could ruin me with a word!
How gay she is—deceitful cat. She means
To win him from me. Oh, fool that I was
Not to keep my ambitions to myself.
(*Remains hesitating. Afraid to advance.*)

Rose: How wonderful he was! All poets are.
They people the dull World with beautiful
Heroines—till the blindest see them walk—

Holt: By Jove! I had not thought of that before.
Lynn must have been marvelously gifted?

Rose: He was. I used to watch him dreaming here,
Sitting absorbed at this very table,
And I was almost jealous at the thought
Of the radiant creatures that he saw
Pass before his mind's eye for his choosing.

Holt: I don't blame you: I'll say his heroines
Were easy on the eye. Were there many
Of them?

Rose: Indeed, yes! One he wrote of had—
"Waving tresses just like the heart's warm blood!"

Holt (*Aside*): I've not seen that one yet! (*Aloud*): This surely is
An intensely interesting garden.
Er—I fancied you might be alone here,
I stopped and left my grip at Restful Inn—

Rose: That abominable hotel! Stay with me—
If you can laugh aside the ravings of
My poor, sadly afflicted companion!
Ah, but we should not laugh!—Sometimes she thinks
That she is I! Say you will stay. We can
Ignore the narrow conventions of the
Village folk—Lynn and I had naught to do
With them—And doubtless it is very true
That only evil thinkers evil see.

Holt: You are most kind. I'll stay with great delight.

Rose: Excuse me then; the afternoon grows late,
And I must see if my spare room, as well
As pantry, is prepared for honored guest.

(*Aside*): What fun! Mary is afraid to come back.
This shall reassure her!
(*Smiling wickedly, she motions Mary.*)

(*Aloud*): Do just humor
My unfortunate companion.

Holt: Surely.
(*Rose trips off along path to right.*)

Holt (*Aside*): Now it's the redheaded one's turn to come!
(*He gazes about with lively expectancy. Mary rejoins
him with trepidation. She fills the glasses and
seats herself nervously.*)

Holt: Was it one of your charming neighbors called
And chatted here so merrily with me?

Mary (*Relieved*): Oh, yes. I saw her here—and must confess
That was why I was so long returning.
I am annoyed by her running in
Too often. (*Aside*): That's the TRUTH; now for a lie:—

(*Aloud*): Her husband left her for she's such a shrew.
And it is whispered too—(I fear it's so)—
Her character—is not admirable.
But gossip sickens me; and must shock you.—
Ah, how sweet it is, how like when Lynn lived,
To sit at table with a handsome man.
Lynn used to say he envied you your brains;
That poets are but shadow-minded folk,
But business men like you have God-like minds.

Holt: Madam, you overwhelm me. (*Aside*): If she is
Crazy her tongue works smoother than her mind
(*Holt is greatly perplexed. He appears to have
an inspiration, which may clear matters up.*)

(*Aloud*): The whole race of men appear like nightmares
In the real presence of lovely woman.

Mary: Oh, women! Weak, helpless, *lonely* creatures!
(*Holt finds it opportune to set a snare.*)

Holt: Do not the children keep you enlivened?

Mary (*In a startled aside*): Children!

Holt: How many little shavers have you?
I remember: Lynn wrote me you had four.
I love children. How soon may I see them?

Mary: Four of the sweetest children!—But they are
Not here now. They are gone to visit their
Grandmother. And shall be away some time.

Holt: Little angels. I did not dream that Lynn
Had taken them with him for a visit
To Heaven. Poets must be privileged
Beyond the common run of men. You know
He wrote me that he married an orphan
Without a parent, like himself; and he
Was left in utter loneliness in youth!

Mary (*Laughing*): It is useless to try to deceive you:
You are too clever. I merely wished to
Defer your seeing them because they've played
Out in the road all day, and are so soiled.

(*Aside*): I'll have to rush out and hire four urchins!)

Holt: Out in the road, did you say? (*Aside*): This may be
Another explanation of "my dream."

(*Aloud*):
You have a girl, of course; how old is she?

Mary (*Cautiously*): Didn't Lynn write you the children's ages?

Holt: No.

Mary: Well—they are all small. The eldest girl—
Is ten, or thereabouts. Mothers, because
They are women, find it hard to keep tab
On birthdays! (*Aside*): I'll hire children old enough
To bribe them to obey my instructions!)

Holt: The sun won't linger so I can. And now
I'll be off; and come again tomorrow.

Mary: The moments now shall drag so leadenly.

(*Aside*): I'd beg him get his grip and bring it here
So he might not stumble onto any facts
But he might think me bold, and be nonplused.)

Holt (*Aside*): I'm asked, and yet not asked, to stay tonight!
The crazed one seems more sane than her mistress.)

(*Aloud*): Then dare I come again at candle light
And spend another pleasant while in chat?

Mary (*Aside*): Glory! He's falling for me! All is well;
Tomorrow we may wedded be. And gone.

(*Aloud*): Oh, come. Do come; you cannot guess how pleased
I am, how happy, that you desire to.

(*Holt exits along path by bungalow*)

Mary (*Aside*): Now I must rush out into the highways
And compel some children to come in!

(*She snatches up her hat, and goes out at the
hedge gate. Rose and Holt meet on path.*)

Holt: I go for my suitcase, and shall return
At candlelight.—Oh, bye-the-bye, I am
Eager to see the little babe, whose proud
Stepfather I hope very soon to be.

Rose (*stunned, then smiling gayly*):
The little thing is asleep in its crib.

Holt: I hope he awakes by my return. Good bye.
(*Exits, right.*)

Rose: Heavens! Can I find a baby somewhere?

ACT III.

SCENE 1.—Interior of parlor in bungalow. There is a couch, a table to one side, some chairs, and a shaded lamp on the table. Mary is instructing four children of assorted sizes, as to their words and behavior. There is a knock at the door, center.

Mary: He returns!
(*She opens door. Smiling impishly, Rose enters
with a bundle, which she lays on the couch.*)

Mary: Where do you keep coming from?

Rose (*Astounded*): What—what are all these children doing here?

Mary: They are Mrs. Dunn's children. Understand?

Rose: I don't. Yes, I do. (*Aside*): Mary has her wires
Crossed. She's found out there were offspring, but does
Not know how many—She thinks there's safety
In numbers! When Holt comes I'll tell him this
Is my companion's latest illusion.

(*Rose begins laughing immoderately. Mary
goes out angrily. The four children follow.
Rose strives for composure and goes out left.
Hugh Holt enters center door as she exists.*)
(*Holt discovers the bundle is a baby. He
begins playing with it. Enter Mary and the
four children.*)

Holt (*pointing*):

One, two, three, four, five. I thought there were but
Four children?

Mary (*Dumbfounded at sight of baby*):

There are but four. One of these
Belongs to a neighbor. (*Aside*): This is Rose's work!
She is adding to my difficulties.
The minx; she shall have none of the million.

(*Aloud*):

A dear woman in the town has agreed
To keep the children while we go on our
Honeymoon—provided we are married
At once; and leave tomorrow. Is't your wish?
(*Holt sinks into chair with baby across his
knee. He stares at the four children and
then at the baby.*)

Holt: This is so sudden. (*Aside*): My brain begins to
Work; bless the old thing. I now know the one
I met in the road is really Mrs. Dunn.
She was charming when we dined just now.
I must go tell her what is going on.
This is the thickest plot I's ever in.
But it is thinning out. (*Aloud*): Excuse me, please.
(*He drops baby on couch and goes out hastily*) Center

Mary: I am frightened. If that Rose is sneaking
About this bungalow I'll wring her neck!
(*Exit furiously. Right. The children trail
after her uncertainly.*)

SCENE 2.—Same room a little later. The lamp is lighted. A glass, and pitcher of
water sets on the table. Mary is pacing the floor in uncertainty and distress.
Ella enters. Center door.

Ella: The game is finished, Mary, and I win.

Mary: What do you mean?

Ella: Holt and I are stopping
At the Restful Inn. I met him when he
First arrived in town, and have convinced him—
Rather, you and Rose with your children have
Convinced him that I'm the real Mrs. Dunn.
We've just parted, after laughing our heads
Off at you two. And he has gone to get
A minister to marry us tonight.

Mary: Tonight!

Ella: The Dunn's had no child. He knew that.
I explained you were two envious friends;
Declared myself amazed you thought of this
Most senseless prank—or scheme—and begged him not
To call the police, and make a ten-day talk;
I said I'd come and chase you off right quick;
Sweeten our honeymoon with forgiveness!—
He has such faith in me he never thought
To sniff for paint when he was in the house!
(*Ella bursts into happy laughter.*)

Mary: Married tonight? A millionaire? It can't
Be true. You seek to scare me.

Ella: Oh, well, dear,
Don't believe it if you can't. I must go.
(Exit, still laughing. Center door.)
(Mary remains standing like a statue. Rose enters
from left, searching frantically.)

Rose: What have you done with that baby? I put
It in the bedroom, and it's gone.

Mary: I sent
It home with those children till tomorrow.
And now there won't be any tomorrow.
Ella has outwitted us: grabbed the prize.

Rose: What do you mean? That Ella has met Holt?
(She grasps Mary's arm. Mary rapidly
repeats Ella's words.)

Mary: The hateful minx! This is why she refused
To help me. I'll die if she wins Hugh Holt!

Rose: I'll save your life—by helping ruin *her* plans.

Mary: A message—delivered at the hotel
Advising him to investigate, and
Not to wed until he has—We must haste—
(They go out excitedly to right. Enter Hugh Holt
center, supporting Mrs. Dunn. She is weak, pale,
in a fainting condition from weariness. Holt
assists her to a chair, and puts a glass of water
to her lips.)

Holt: Truly, madam, you are exhausted.

Mrs. Dunn: I
Have had a terrible experience.
I walked so many miles today I fainted
Just at my journey's end. How glad I am
You found me and carried me in.

Holt: Then your
Home is near? I shall 'phone for a car—

Mrs. Dunn: Home? This is my home. I am Mrs. Dunn.

Holt: Mrs. Dunn! (Aside): But not the red-haired one yet;
This must be one of his tragedy queen
Visions! This thing is getting uncanny!
Mrs. Dunn just explained to me about
Her two girl friends: but who's this half-alive
Ghost? I begin to think the place haunted.
No wonder the real Mrs. Dunn moved
To Restful Inn, deciding it was time
To have the bungalow renovated!

(Aloud): It's close in here; I'll go out in the air.
I'll raise this window so that you can take
The air too. (Aside): I wonder if she will? Ha!
(Holt pushes Mrs. Dunn's chair into a shaded
corner, with the back of the chair toward the

window. She is surprised when he leaves her abruptly. She sinks back as if utterly exhausted. Holt exits to left. Enter Rose and Mary, center, dragging Ella between them. Holt appears at a window, spying in on Mrs. Dunn. He is amazed to see the three girls, and makes as though to leap in to Ella's rescue. He decides to listen a moment.)

Mary (*Angrily*): So you marry him tonight! Here you stay.
We've sent him a letter that shall end your Aspirations—

(Mrs. Dunn rises and advances.)

Mrs. Dunn: What does this mean? Who are—?
The three girls turn toward her and exclaim,
aghast, in chorus:

Mary: Mrs. Dunn!

Rose: Mrs. Dunn!

Ella: Mrs. Dunn!

*Holt springs through the window and catches the
wavering form of Mrs. Dunn in his arms.*

The three girls, simultaneously:

Holt!

Holt: Thank you for your triple introduction,
Girls.

Mrs. Dunn (*To Mary*): Your face I remember. It was you
Who drugged me; had me carried off by thugs—
From whom I escaped by leaping from a car
That jolted over the road the while they
Drank their liquor and nearly forgot me—

Holt (*Amazed*): Is it possible these beautiful girls
Have had you thus criminally outraged!
*(He and Mrs. Dunn engage in earnest conversation.
As she explains and he relates a part of his
experience.)*

Rose (*To Mary*): Dear girl, you are so bright I think that you
Must know some way to get us out of this?

Mary: I do. Run. Run! We've got to catch a train!
*(Holt would intercept the fleeing maids, but Mrs.
Dunn prevents him.)*

Ella: Napoleon's shades flee from their Waterloo!
(Exit the three girls center door.)

Mrs. Dunn: Let them go! It's fun to see them fleeing
In pallid fear, in the belief they must.
And now dear Mr. Holt, I must thank you—

Holt: You've proved yourself the sweet and gracious Ruth
Whom Lynn forever sang the praises of.
And dare I hope he spoke of me to you?—
Told you, as he did me, a treasure rare
He would gladly give into my keeping?
I pray it's so?

Mrs. Dunn (*Blushing*): It is. I am his gift.
Holt kneels and kisses her hand devotedly.

CURTAIN

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